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# One journalist vs. the KGB

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Imagine your surprise if you picked up a newspaper this afternoon and discovered that it contained a verbatim transcript of a telephone conversation you had with a friend a few days ago.

And then imagine that the newspaper said your seemingly innocent conversation about what went on at work that day was actually conducted in code, and that what you were really talking about was blowing up buildings, assassinating several dozen of your enemies, and betraying your country to a foreign power.

Paul Anastasi doesn't have to imagine.

"I just couldn't believe it," he recalls. "It was a shocking experience. I hope you don't ever have to go through it. The largest-circulation daily newspaper in

Greece... saying I was a terrorist..."

For Paul Anastasi this was just the latest chapter in a life that increasingly resembles a novel co-authored by Ian Fleming and Franz Kafka. Five years ago Mr. Anastasi wrote a book accusing the popular Greek newspaper Ethnos of financial ties to the KGB, the Soviet secret police. Since then he has been sentenced to jail, his phones have been tapped, he has been accused of plotting mass murder, and he has been publically denounced as a CIA agent plotting nothing less than the conquest of all Europe for the United States.

"It's been distracting," he observes with heroic understatement.

Of course, Mr. Anastasi — a newspaperman who covers Greece for The New York Times and the London Daily Telegraph — has given nearly as good as he's gotten. His book became a best seller, the men he

accused of wiretapping him have been sentenced to jail, and he managed to get his own prison sentence thrown out by the Greek Supreme Court.

Yet another chapter in this real-life thriller is now unfolding in Greek courtrooms. Three hearings were held recently in cases between Mr. Anastasi and the publisher of Ethnos, including mutual assertions of libel. Greece is now waiting until after Sunday's election and a month of court vacation for the verdicts in these much-publicized suits. Although Mr. Anastasi's earlier jail sentence has been annulled by the Supreme Court, he may still go to prison. He swears he would rather do that than pay a nickel in damages if he should lose the upcoming libel suit.

"The KGB won't get any moral or financial help from me," he says. "They already have too much."

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The funny thing is that Paul Anastasi is a liberal. When Greece had a right-wing regime, he was always in trouble with the government.

"I was very much against the former regime," he says. "I was called in several times by the former press secretary, who felt my reporting was too leftist. They were always warning me to stop it."

Nonetheless, he was fascinated by the newspaper Ethnos, which began publishing in 1981 and quickly became the most popular newspaper in Greece.

Ethnos was the country's first tabloid newspaper. It was one of the first papers in Greece to use color photos. It has a clean, modern layout, and its sports reporting is extensive and well-written. The Wall Street Journal recently called it "the most professionally produced newspaper in Greece."

But what interested Mr. Anastasi was the newspaper's politics, which were unabashedly pro-Soviet and anti-United States. According to Ethnos (as reported in The Wall Street Journal and from Ethnos clippings seen by this reporter), the Ber-

lin Wall was built as a defense against U.S. aggression. Poland's Solidarity union is a CIA tool. The pope is a Mafia gangster. The Soviet Union is the "world's first peace bloc." Ronald Reagan is a "paranoid monster." What intrigued Mr. Anastasi was speculation among other Greek publications that Ethnos was somehow bankrolled by the Soviet Union.

"I had heard it before, and I was very skeptical," he says. "I found it very difficult to believe... I could never imagine at that time, that my investigation would have turned up so many KGB agents, and so many documents and pictures which gave evidence of the joint publishing venture with the Soviets."

Mr. Anastasi amassed his evidence from a Greek communist named Yannis Yannikios, a jilted business partner of George Bobolas, who publishes Ethnos. Mr. Yannikios was suing Mr. Bobolas; he claims he was unfairly squeezed out of the company that publishes Ethnos.

Mr. Yannikios' lawsuit was not going well. Mr. Anastasi began meeting with him and he began probing. In all, there would be more than 40 interviews with Mr. Yannikios and his family.

"He gradually presented me more and more evidence," Mr. Anastasi says. "He would tell me something, and I would say, 'Yes, but how can you prove it?' He'd hand me a copy of a document. I'd say, 'This is a photocopy, this won't do.' So out comes the original..."

"He had everything, stacks of things. I don't think anyone will ever get the chance again to get so many documents, photographs and telexes to document a KGB operation."

The story Mr. Anastasi heard from Mr. Yannikios went like this:

In 1977, after suggestions from Communist Party leaders, Mr. Yannikios formed a partnership with Mr. Bobolas. The next year the men published a Greek-language version of The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, in cooperation with the Soviet copy-right office.

The Soviets were so pleased with sales of the encyclopedia — more than 30,000 sets — that they asked Mr. Yannikios to submit a proposal for a daily newspaper. In 1979 he gave them a set of plans for what became Ethnos. But then the Soviets decided to deal with Mr. Bobolas alone, pushing Mr. Yannikios out of the picture.

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